

FOR CRYING OUT

||||| JOSEPH RATHGEBER

for/after Etheridge Knight

Fuck MFA programs, MFer. Low-res, too. I never went to sleepaway camp—too expensive. Fuck paywalls and fuck poetry contests: Entry fees: Entry fees: Entry fees. Fuck if I don't have a gas tank to fill, regular, unleaded: I let it bother me. Fuck poems that resort to Fucking: Fuck fellowships and grants and fellows and grantees and all that you routinely take for granted. Fuck all idols except Etheridge Knight. Fuck 'em. I will watch my daughter whee down the slide for eternity: Fuck your nomination: Fuck your finalist status: Fuck your Facebook your Twitter your social gathering: Fuck your salon: Exclusion: Exclusion: Exclusion. Fuck conveyer belt poems: Container ship poems: Capitalist mode of production poems. I just got a part-time job off Craigslist, climbing scaffolding, washing windows with toddler-sized squeegees: Cash: Under-the-table. Fuck your poem, it's over my head: I need a nap: I'm a real, the realest crankypants: I'm a pill. I'm a Theremin-playing terrorist. I'm on the terror list. The do-not-fly list. Fuck yourself: Your selfie: Your meta. I'm calling my union rep right now. Lord: Lord: Lord: Lord: Lord: Lord: Lord: Lord: Lord: Lord: Fuck the Evangelical billboards in the heartland: Fuck the atheist billboards at the Lincoln Tunnel helix. Oh my God: The first time my daughter spontaneously smiled at me: Oh: Fuck the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Fuck being blacklisted: Being bought: Fuck the Big 5: I write it out in a verse: Fuck harper-collins: Fuck penguin random house: Fuck simon and schuster: Fuck hachette: Fuck macmillan: For runnin' that wannabe Big Willie shit. I haven't paid for a haircut in years. We don't like Lorin Stein we decide. I have a stable and fulfilling marriage and a limited vocabulary. Fuck the rigging.



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Joseph Rathgeber is writer from New Jersey. His novel is *Mixedbloods* (Fomite, 2019). His book of hybrid poetry is *MJ* (Another New Calligraphy, 2015). His collection of short fiction is *The Abridged Autobiography of Yousef R. and Other Stories* (ELJ Editions, 2014). He is also a hypocrite, as he has applied for and won a New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship for his poetry and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for his prose.

This poem originally appeared in the *Santa Clara Review*.

Your idea of misery: to submit.

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